

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES**

**Town of Blowing Rock**

**Town Council**

**Budget Work Session**

**May 19, 2015**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council continued their annual budget work sessions on Tuesday, May 19, 2015. The work sessions were held at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street, Blowing Rock. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro tem Albert Yount, Council Members Dan Phillips, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson, and Ray Pickett. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Finance Director Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Town Manager Fogleman followed-up on several items mentioned during the previous work session. He said a suggestion had been made by members of the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission's (BRAAC) to place flower towers along Main Street. After discussing the issue, Council decided to allow the flower towers on private property and only if private business owners wished to purchase and maintain them.

Upon a request from Council during the previous work session, Town Manager Fogleman reported the Club House located on Clark Street was currently operating with an average annual subsidy of \$2,000. He advised that several civic groups used the building on a regular basis and reviewed the costs for upkeep on the building. Council Member Phillips suggested the Club House be marketed stronger in order to gain more revenue. Council

Member Matheson suggested the Club House be closed at the end of October until April or May in order to save on expenses.

Town Manager Fogleman advised the TDA draft infrastructure budget includes funding for the gateway project in the amount of \$150,000.

Regarding technology infrastructure, the replacement of the public safety building on Green Hill would be funded in part by the Fire Department and with sales tax money. Mr. Fogleman stated the Highway Patrol and Watauga County would be contacted regarding partnering with the Town for a portion of the costs since they were also users of the facility.

Phase II of the desktop replacement plan was discussed briefly. Mr. Fogleman stated that 7 to 10 of the 31 staff computers may be hooked directly to the Town's server through a thin client option in order to reduce the cost of the technology upgrades.

According to Town Manager Fogleman, the black aluminum fencing on Valley Boulevard for a total cost of \$210,000 was to be paid in three (3) annual installments of \$70,000 to NCDOT. He advised the first installment would be due once the project was completed possibly as early as the spring of 2016.

Town Manager Fogleman spoke briefly regarding capital projects for the Water/Wastewater Treatment facilities. He commented that \$75,000 had been appropriated to the water distribution system for the valve and hydrant maintenance program. Mr. Fogleman said that in the upcoming fiscal year budget, approximately one-half of the 39 fire hydrants identified for improvement would be upgraded and the remaining would be updated in the following fiscal year.

Town Manager Fogleman reviewed the General Fund revenue and the sales tax summary for the upcoming fiscal year.

Town Manager Fogleman commented that solid waste revenue was trending downward due to businesses using other solid waste companies. He advised the FY 2015-2016 budget proposed an increase in water and sewer rates of 5.1%.

The Classification and Pay Study Implementation Plan was discussed. Mr. Fogleman stated the goal was to continue to close the gap between average wages and the market as directed by Council. He advised the proposed budget had two and one-half positions for consideration including the Utility Billing Coordinator increasing from 20 hours part-time to 40 hours full-time, a landscape specialist assistant, a utility plant operator and intern support for the administration department.

Council Member Phillips stated now was not the proper time to add new positions due to the proposed property tax increase, classification and pay study, the bond referendum, etc. Council Member Pickett commented a landscape specialist assistant was needed because there were too few volunteers to help with landscaping, flower planting, etc. around Town.

Council felt more information was needed regarding the need for the new positions and their effect on the upcoming budget. Council directed Town Manager Fogleman and Finance Director Norman to further review the proposed budget by line items present options to decrease the total budget and reduce the recommended tax increase by one cent to two cents

Council Member Phillips asked about out-sourcing more items instead of doing them in-house to possibly save the Town money. Town Manager Fogleman advised that they check into those types of possibilities periodically.

Town Manager Fogleman stated he had recently heard from NCDOT and a protected left turn signal at the intersection of Sunset Drive and Valley Boulevard would be installed for those traveling north on Hwy. 321 turning left onto Sunset Drive to go downtown.

Council discussed the Hwy. 321 Widening Project and directed Town Manager Fogleman to request copies of contracts that pertained to the project from NCDOT.

**ADJOURN**

The work session was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_ **ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_  
**J.B. Lawrence** **Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**